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SPECIAL FREEZE DAMAGE REPORT, CALIFORNIA FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Tentative appraisals of freeze damage to California fruits and vegetables were published in the reports issued by the Crop Reporting Board on January 6 and 10. Freezing weather continued through January 12. The following preliminary summary incorporates information received since these reports were published.

Severe injury to citrus crops is certain, but still quite indefinite. Full effects of low temperatures are usually not apparent for several weeks following such freeze injury. The present damage is especially indefinite because freezing night temperatures have continued all this week in most citrus producing areas. There also has been considerable snowfall at low elevations, which is exceedingly uncommon.

Opinions to date indicate approximate probable injury to navel and miscellaneous oranges in central and northern California to be about 12 percent of total production, since more than two-thirds of that crop was harvested prior to January 1, and about 30 percent injury in the combined southern counties where only a small volume was harvested before freeze. This would indicate about 26 percent loss of the total expected State production. Probably not more than one-sixth of the damaged fruit can later be used for by-products.

About 92 percent of expected Valencia orange crop would have come from the southern counties and injury is reported at from 25 to 31 percent over important Valencia counties except Ventura, where injury is reported to be much less. A loss of about 23 percent is indicated for the entire State Valencia crop. It might develop that about 40 percent of the injured fruit could be used for processing. Opinions relating to injury of originally expected 1948-49 lemon crop range from 7 to 60 percent. Losses are probably more of small fruit and small forms set than of well sized fruit. State crop reduction is probably about 27 percent. Reported Desert Valley grapefruit losses range from 30 to 50 percent with probably heavier loss in Imperial than in Coachella Valley. Summer crop grapefruit losses probably 18 to 20 percent for all counties combined. About 94 percent of the acreage is in southern counties. No serious tree damage is indicated by reports to date.

It is somewhat early to make complete appraisal of freeze damage, but freezing weather January 3 - 12 affected about 120,000 acres of California vegetables. Melons and potatoes were in various stages of growth. Apparently about 32,000 acres were seriously damaged. About 7,900 acres of artichokes were severely damaged by low temperatures, affecting both buds and vines. Supplies will be light during the next 60 days. However, vines will recover and start producing buds in March if weather is favorable. Production will be reduced about 20 percent. About 10,000 acres of covered melons in desert areas that were planted in December are a complete loss. It is necessary for growers to re-plant. No appreciable delay in harvest is foreseen. About 4,500 acres of celery for harvest during the next 90 days were hard hit by freezes, but very little is expected to be a total loss. Most fields will recover, producing smaller yields and poorer quality celery. Present supplies have been reduced.

Tomatoes planted for winter and early spring harvest, totaling about 4,500 acres, are almost a complete loss. Some vines may recover, but most acreage will require replanting for the spring crop. Loss is heavy here due to expense of growing tomatoes under brush. About 1,500 acres of summer squash in the desert areas are a total loss. Growers can replant for spring crop. About 2,900 acres of winter peas lost for the present. New vine growth will produce pods in late March. Four thousand acres of late potatoes that are still in the ground were frozen. Loss is estimated at 40 percent, or 220,000 sacks. Other crops such as broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, lettuce, onions, and spinach were not seriously damaged. Harvest of maturing crops was delayed and present supplies are light. Yields on acreage now producing were reduced, but total volume for season probably was not seriously affected. Quality of current harvest was adversely affected. Growth of young plants has been retarded, but their ultimate development will be influenced more by weather during the next 60 days. Some replanting of new fields is necessary, but on a limited scale.